

Two great tastes, together again

Brewer, local business, team up to revive an old beer

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A long time ago, it seems, oysters were a common food, found in the pubs of England, much as one might find a bowl of pretzels today. And, like their 20th century counterparts, the pub goers liked to wash down their favorite bar snack with a good beer.

For those 19th century oyster lovers, that meant stout. Then, someone decided that not only did the two flavors go well together, they should be together.

And thus Oyster Stout was born. Beer historian Michael Jackson's wrote on his Beer Hunter Web site, that a brewery in New Zealand brewed a stout made with oysters in 1929.

Eighty-one years later, Duxbury's Island Creek Oysters has teamed up with Boston-based Harpoon Brewery to create its own oyster stout.

The idea of reviving this old combination came together over, (of course) oysters and beer, said Liz Melby, director of communications for Harpoon.

"We've had a great relationship," said Island Creek's director of Business Development Shore Gregory. The two companies, he said, have regularly supported each other's charitable efforts, such as Island Creek's Oyster Festival. Last summer, during a planning meeting for that event, said Gregory, someone brought up the idea of Oyster Stout, and "one thing led to another."



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Skip Bennett of Island Creek Oysters and Katie Tame of Harpoon Brewery out on the Duxbury oyster mats. Creek and Harpoon have teamed up to produce an Oyster Stout.

Oyster beer features local product

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The creative brain behind Harpoon's Island Creek Oyster Stout is Katie Tame, 26, the only female brewer working for Harpoon.

"She's very talented and creative," said Liz Melby, and was "excited to take on the challenge."

Tame began experimenting with test batches of oyster stout. The company has a pair of 20-gallon fermenters that, she said, the brewers are encouraged to experiment with.

The first batch was created in July, said Tame, and after four tries, she had come up with the recipe for new stout.

Oyster stouts, explained Tame, aren't a widely brewed beer, so there weren't many existing recipes to base her version on. Most oyster stouts are what she called "celebration beers" created by home brewing enthusiasts for festivals.

She also came down to Duxbury, said Gregory, to get a little hands-on

experience with the oysters and help out with the harvest.

Tame said her oyster stout would have "a little bit of sweetness," but wasn't a sweet stout. "It's a little bready," she noted.

As of this writing, brewing of Island Creek Oyster Stout was set to begin



Thursday, as members of the Island Creek crew headed to Boston to shuck oysters for batch.

Tame said it would take about two weeks for the beer to be ready for sale.

According to Gregory, it will be available in

bottles at Foodie's and on draft at the Winsor House sometime in February.

But, it won't be around long, the beer is part of what Harpoon calls its 100 Barrel series, a series of limited edition beers that allow the company's brewers "to get really creative," said Melby. The beer is brewed only once, and "once it's gone, it's gone."



Would you try Oyster Stout?
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